

THRILLING POSSUM HUNT.

Down in Georgia In Old Days.

Plantation School of Study on How to Catch the Animals.

Just as the old plantations were the schools for negro minstrelsy so they were the schools for a study of the 'possums, how to catch them, how to cook them, and then how good they were to eat, says a writer in the Atlanta Constitution. The catching comes first, for you must catch him before you can do the rest.

The first thing in an old-time 'possum hunt was to prepare light wood for torches. Whenever a negro or white boy, either, got out to the wood pile whittling fat lightwood into long strips, the dogs knew as well what was coming as the people themselves, and a barking began that echoed from woods to woods, and from plantation to plantation. While one or two were getting ready for the torch wood another was at the potato bank getting potatoes to fill one corner of the great old fireplace. A place was made in the ashes for these potatoes, and here was someone to take them out at the proper time and put them on one side to cool by the time the hunters returned, and whoever has not tasted of the old Georgia yam, roasted and cooled till the sugar was cooling from the skin, has missed something almost as good as 'possum itself. This all accomplished, the horn is blown, the dogs go wild, and off across the fields the hunters start. The dogs are far ahead and at the first hedge row this side the bottom, where wild grapes hang and 'summons have sweetened, one of the pups 'opens' and the other scamper that way to 'open' too, and the music begins. But the hunters want better authority than pups, but soon old Rattler raises his long head and 'opens' with that loud, long bark, and the hunters know the 'possum is there. There was always some one dog in a pack that had the entire confidence of the hunters, whenever that dog 'opened' there was never a doubt.

Old Rattler lived a much longer life than most dogs, and through all that life he had never fooled the hunters but once. We had just struck the edge of the river bottom, and were moving up the bluff to find a place to get down, when the "pups" and all the pack but old Rattler, 'opened' on a hot trail. Here they went along the bluff at the edge of the bottom, and it was music to delight the hunter; but old Rattler had no 'opened' yet. It was with no uncertain sound, and never a hunter had a doubt in the truthfulness of that sound. On that trail old Rattler joined with the rest for a full half mile, right up to the "tree." The hunters hurried, as hunters always do, and we found they had 'freed' up the bluff toward the bottom and lodged on the tops of the other big trees that came up from the bottom below.

The big tree was at such an angle as made it easy for any dog, even a bob-tailed dog, to walk it, and so we asked them until one of the pups went out like a giff till he struck the tangled tops over the bottom, and then went down with a scramble of a hundred 'possums to the ground below. Another and another and another of the young dogs went out, but they never returned; they went scrambling through the limbs to the ground. All the negroes and some of the whites began to think there were 'haunts' around. But old Rattler still had our confidence, and we waited on him. Out he went, slowly and cautiously, and we all held our breath to see if he would meet the fate of the young dogs. We didn't have long to wait, for pretty soon there was a greater scramble in the tree-tops than all the young dogs had made together. Old Rattler had untied the thing, whatever it was, and holding on like grim death, they went down through the limbs together. At the bottom Old Rattler still held his hold till such a bleating began as was never heard in a 'possum hunt before. It was nothing but Tom Brown's billiard—he had butted the dogs off one by one till old Rattler sawed him and they went down together. That was the only time in the long life of Old Rattler that he ever fooled a hunter.

We had already caught about as many as we cared to carry and so we built a fire to rest a while before starting on our return trip. As boys will do, some of them began poking sticks at the 'possums to see them snap. One old fellow was unusually vicious for a 'possum and sick after stick was snapped like a straw as it

was presented at his mouth. A mischievous fellow remarked carelessly to a Yankee, along for scientific study, that it was strange that the 'possum would snap the stick so viciously when if you would just spit on your finger you could rub it all over his nose and mouth without the least sign of viciousness.

"That so?" said the man out for nature study. "I'll just try that for myself," whereupon he spat well up on his finger, poked it up to the big 'possum and no sooner done than the 'possum nailed him and held on a only two things will hold—a 'possum and a turtle—a bulldog is not in their class for holding. It took half an hour to get that finger loose by prizing between laughs, and that Yankee returned North the next day, remarking that he knew as much about the darned Georgia 'possum as he cared to know.

The potatoes put in the ashes on the start have long since been cooled and the syrup is running from them. To eat these potatoes after the hunt is over seems to be a part of the sport. There are plenty for all—whites and blacks—and no meal in the world was ever relished more than these cold roasted potatoes. Such a thing as going to bed after a hunt was seldom thought of. The big plantations all had gin houses, but the humblest homes had some sort of cotton house and in this cotton the hunter would scratch a hole, cover up and catch an hour of the sweetest sleep ever enjoyed by man.

A 'possum is cleaned pretty much the same as a hog, save that you must use strong ashes or lime in getting off the hair. After the cleaning comes the cooking, and in that the years have taught me much. We used to bake the 'possum whole with the potatoes packed about it, and this was good enough for heaven's sake. But we have learned that this way is nowhere. In a real fat 'possum there was always something a little disagreeable—too much fat. Parboiled the 'possum till every bone slips off, then work the flesh together till till fat and lean are entirely mixed; season in a pan big enough to hold your potatoes, after they have been boiled and peeled then bake to a brown and—

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Is Chivalry Dead.

The body of a girl who had taken her own life was found in a New York lodging house the other day. Beside it was a note addressed to her mother in Canada. It read:

"Dear Mother: I have lost my job. I have no money left to pay my board. I cannot find work, and I am afraid to ask help from any man in New York."

Is the terrible reflection upon American manhood that is implied in these words justified by facts? Is the age of chivalry forever passed? Did this poor girl actually run the risk she imagined in seeking assistance from a man?

There are questions worth while considering. We fear that beneath the bitterness of her words, uttered in the extremity of her need, there lies a measure of truth to the utter shaming of our Twentieth century civilization.

Hundreds of good men in New York would have been ready to help had they known her need, and would have expected no concession in return; but how was she to know the good men from the bad? How was she to tell the man of honor and chivalrous regard for womanhood from the wolf that takes advantage of any woman that comes within his power?

No difference in dress would mark the distinction. Education and culture are not seals of decency. The devil of lust and impurity, too often is garbed in fine raiment and has all the graces of schools and society. There lies the danger. The girl knew it, and sooner than run the risk she took her life.

There is no need for a campaign among men for the renewal of true chivalry. We have much of the veneer that passes beneath the same, the courtesy, the complaint and the consideration for women that is due their sex. But the deeper chivalry that loves and honors womanhood, that will defend it at all costs, and most loyally when it is the victim of circumstances and the possible prey of the vicious, even when its own weakness and willingness to sin is its greatest foe—for this chivalry we have not enough.—Louisville Herald.

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SMALL FARMS NEED OF COUNTRY.

James J. Hill Says Method Must be Changed.

Land Must be Better Cultivated or Nation Will Suffer Shortage.

"Smaller farms" must be the means through which the United States will feed a population of 200,000,000, in 1950.

This is the fundamental proposition which James J. Hill advances in the first of a series of articles in the World's work. He first excludes the possibility of our producing enough wheat under present methods and predicts \$1.50 as the price of that staple in the near future. He also concludes that it will be impossible for us to purchase abroad enough grain to cover an annual deficiency which he places at 36,000,000 bushels. The remedy as Mr. Hill sees it is this:

1. The farmer must cultivate no more land than he can till thoroughly. With less labor he will get more results. Of fiscal statistics show that the net profit from one crop of 20 bushels of wheat to the acre is as great as that from 2 to 16, after original cost of production has been paid.

2. There must be rotation of crops. Ten years of single cropping will nearly wear out any but the richest soil. A proper three or four year rotation of crops actually enriches the land.

3. Three must be soil renovation by fertilizing; and the best fertilizer is that provided by nature herself—barn yard manure.

That the United States must move quickly in this matter, Mr. Hill firmly believes.

"The startling aspect of this changed condition of supply and demand," he says, "is that it is immediate. We have to provide for a contingency not distant from us by nearly a generation, but already present. The food condition presses upon us now. The great fall in wheat exports and the rise of prices.

"For the first nine months of the fiscal year, ending June 30, flour combined was but 103, 251,200 bushels. Such is the size of the national surplus in a fair crop year. It must shrink more than 100,000,000 bushels for each three years hereafter. Obviously it is time to quit speculating about what might occur even twenty or thirty years hence, and begin to take thought for the morrow. As far as our food supply is concerned, right now the lean years have begun.

"I have stated the national problem in terms of wheat for the sake of clearness; its solution admits of similar statement. The average wheat yield per acre in the United States in 1907 was 14 bushels. The average for the last ten years is 13.88. That is, in 1907 it required 45,211,000 acres to produce the 634,087,000 bushels that we raised. It is a disgraceful record.

"About a century ago this was the average production per acre of Great Britain. After the appointment of a royal commission and a campaign for the better method of cultivation begun over a hundred years ago, the fields of the United Kingdom today, tilled for a thousand years, in a climate where excessive moisture is unfavorable to wheat growers, yield over 32 bushels of wheat per acre. Germany, and agricultural country almost from the time of Tacitus, produces 27.6 bushels per acre. Suppose the United States produced 28 bushels per acre, or double its present showing. That would be nothing extraordinary in view of what European countries have done with inferior soils and less favorable climates.

"There is scarcely a limit, at least none has yet been reached by the most intensive cultivation, to the value which an acre may be made to produce. Right methods of farming without which no agricultural country such as this can hope to remain prosperous, or even to escape eventual poverty, are not complicated and are within the reach of the most modest means.

"They include a study of soils and seeds, so as to adapt the one to the other; a diversification of industry, including the cultivation of different crops and the raising of live stock; a careful rotation of crops, so that the land will not be worn out by successive years of single cropping; intelligent fertilizing, by the system of rotation, by cultivating leguminous plant and above all, by the economic use of every particle of fertilizing material from stock barns and yards; a careful selection of grain used for seed; and, first of all perhaps in importance, the substitution of the small farm, through ly tilled, for the large farm, with its

weeds, its neglected corners, its abused soil and its thin products.

"Thus make room for the new population whose added product will help restore our place as an exporter of food stuffs. The fruit farmer, the truck farmer, every cultivator of the soil who has specialized his work, has learned the value of these simple principles. The problem is, how to impress it upon the 30,000,000 or more such persons who live on the land and till it.

"The modern agricultural method is both a money-maker and a labor saver. The cost of rent and production for continuous wheat cropping averages \$7.50 per acre. When therefore, the farmer obtains, as so many in the Northwest do, a yield of eight or ten bushels per acre, it just about meets at average farm prices, the cost of production, leaving him either nothing at all for his year's toll, or else a margin of debt.

For the same amount of labor covering the same time, but intelligently applied to a smaller area, he might easily produce by improved methods twenty bushels to the acre, leaving him a profit of over \$12 per acre. The not unreasonable yield of twenty eight bushels would net him \$20, which is 10 per cent for his land.

"This gigantic waste, applying the same measure to the production of the entire country, is going on every year. If it can be stopped the saving would pay for building a Panama Canal every year; it would, in two years more than pay the estimated expense of improving every available water way in the United States; it would save more money for the farmer than the railroads could if they carried all his grain to market free of charge."

**Children Cry
FOR FLETCHER'S
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The Cat and the Baby's Breath.

Deceased came to her death from strangulation due to a large black cat caught in the act of sucking her breath as she slept. This has been the verdict of more than one coroner's jury. Elsie Ann Thaxter, 1 month and three weeks old, daughter of John and Alice Thaxter, 5210 Morningdale avenue, Pittsburg, is one of the most recent child victims to be murdered by a black cat which sucked the breath according to the coroner's jury of Allegheny county. According to the testimony taken at the inquest, the cat was found with its paws about the baby's neck and its mouth into hers, drawing out her breath.

Several physicians have investigated the ancient story that cats suck the breath of babies, and Dr. J. Rice Gibbs declares that the theory is ridiculous. Cats occasionally kill children, he declares, but they do it in a different fashion.

"It has been stated that a cat's nostrils are formed as to make a perfect juncture with the nose of a baby," said Dr. Gibbs, "and that a little pressure would push them upward and make them a perfect fit. Then the cat's chin would rest over and below the baby's mouth, preventing it from opening to relieve the strangulation while the cat sucked its breath. That is all rot. The manner in which little children are killed by cats is this:

A cat, looking for a warm place to curl up and sleep, lies down upon the chest of the little child, and, being quite heavy—many cats are as heavy as little babies—simply crushes the breath out of the child's lungs and strangulation takes place, but not through sucking of the child's breath.

"The idea that only black cats kill little babies is equally ridiculous. It is simply because black cats are considered unlucky. In former times the black cat was considered the very genius of witchcraft. In those days when a baby died the blame was often fixed upon some hag, who the judges said had sent a black cat to suck the baby's breath. And often hag and cat suffered

death at the same.

"Evil omen is still the cry in many parts of the world whenever a black cat approaches a cradle. Many modern New Yorkers are so superstitious that the appearance of a black cat in a sick room is considered equivalent to an announcement of approaching death. What could be more absurd?

"Mothers need not be afraid of cats, black, white or green, sucking their babies' breath and murdering them. It is time that this popular fallacy should be exploded."

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